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Message Text

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15
ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-06 EUR-08 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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CIAE-00 /052 W
---------- 111560
O 011013Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3437
INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY SANAA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2450

LIMDIS/NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS PFOR ET
SUBJECT: ERITREA: THE ARAB POSITION AND EPMG NEXT STEPS

DEPT PASS USINT BAGHDAD

REF: ADDIS 2446 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY: AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE HAS INFORMED EMBASSY FEBRUARY 28 THAT EPMG DEL WILL LEAVE SHORTLY FOR KHARTOUM TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS ON ERITREA. SOURCE ALSO PROVIDED DETAILED ACCOUNT OF LIKELY "ARAB LEAGUE POSITION" ON ERITREA AS DISCUSSED BY EPMG DEL DURING ITS RECENT SWING THROUGH ARAB WORLD. END SUMMARY.
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DR. FITIGU TADESSE, MOFA'S AFRICAN/MIDEAST AFFAIRS COUNSELOR IS THE SOURCE OF WHAT FOLLOWS. HE MUST BE COMPLETELY PROTECTED. HE FUNCTIONS MORE OR LESS AS "PERMANENT UNDERSECRETARY" FOR THIS AREA, HAS LONG TENURE IN THIS POSITION, AND EMBASSY CONSIDERS HIS ACCOUNT OF RECENT EPMG DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES AS AUTHORITATIVE.

1. EPMG DEL WHICH RECENTLY WENT TO KHARTOUM, CAIRO, BEIRUT, DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD IN MAJOR ETHIOPIAN DIPLOMATIC EFFORT PUT NEXUS OF ERITREAN PROBLEMS INTO NEW CONTEXT, MADE PRESENTATION TO HOST GOVERNMENTS CONSISTING OF FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. DEL SPEAKS FOR NEW ETHIOPIA. NEW ETHIOPIA HAS DONE AWAY WITH FORMER FEUDAL, CHRISTIAN, CAPITALIST REGIME WEDDED TO "IMPERIALISM" AND ALLIED TO ISRAEL. THE EMPEROR AND HIS COURTIERS ARE UNDER DETENTION. ETHIOPIAN MOSLEMS HAVE BEEN AFFORDED EQUALITY. RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL HAVE BEEN BROKEN. SOCIALISM HAS BEEN PROCLAIMED AND IS BEING IMPLEMENTED.

B. THIS NEW ETHIOPIA HAS ALREADY REORIENTED ITS FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE AFRO/ARAB WORLD. IT AGREES WITH ARAB DEMANDS ON ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL BEHIND ITS 1967 BORDERS; ON THE RESTORATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE; AND IT HAS BEGUN ACTIVELY AND OPENLY TO SUPPORT THESE OBJECTIVES INTERNATIONALLY IN THE UN AND THE OAU.

C. THE NEW ETHIOPIA, THEN, HAS CLEANSED ITSELF OF THE ELEMENTS AND POLICIES WHICH PLACED ITS OLD REGIME AND THE ARAB/MOSLEM PEOPLE IN OPPOSITION TO EACH OTHER. THE NEW ETHIOPIA RESPECTS THE VITAL INTERESTS OF THE ARAB/MOSLEM WORLD AND, IN TURN, IS ENTITLED TO EXPECT THAT WORLD'S RESPECT FOR ITS (ETHIOPIA'S) VITAL INTERESTS, VIZ., ETHIOPIA'S INTEGRITY.

D. ERITREA IS AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN PART OF ETHIOPIA. THE EPMG IS PREPARED TO ACQUIESCE TO ANY INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN ERITREANS AND OTHER ETHIOPIANS ("WE ARE ONE PEOPLE") PROVIDING ONLY THAT ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL UNITY REMAINS INTACT. IN OTHER WORDS, ETHIOPIA IS PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE A "NATIONALITY" (BUT NOT A "NATIONAL") INTEREST OF ERITREANS AND TO GRANT ERITREA MEANINGFUL AUTONOMY WITHIN ONE ETHIOPIA.

2. SOURCE (WHO WAS PRESENT) SAID THAT THE EGYPTIANS AND SUDANESE HAD EXPRESSED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THESE EPMG VIEWS. BOTH HAD OFFERED TO TRANSMIT THEM TO THE INSURGENTS AND TO PRESS THE LATTER TO NEGOTIATE. HOWEVER, BOTH ALSO URGED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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DELEGATION TO IMPRESS UPON THE DIRG THE NEED FOR A QUICK SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM. BOTH ENCOURAGED THE EPMG'S EFFORTS TO SEEK A NEW RELATIONSHIP TO THE EASTERN ARAB WORLD BUT BOTH NOTED THE LIMITS OF THEIR POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES IN PROVIDING ACTIVE SUPPORT.

3. THE EPMG DELEGATION'S BEIRUT STOPOVER WAS DESCRIBED BY DR. FITIGU AS PRIMARILY INTENDED FOR CONTACT WITH THE PRESS. "LEBANON

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HAS NO GOVERNMENT, THE PLO RULES AND MUCH OF LEBANON'S TERRITORY IS OCCUPIED BY PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS."

4. THE SYRIANS HAD BEEN TOUGH. THE DELEGATION HAD MADE ITS INITIAL PRESENTATION TO ABD AL HALIM KHADDAM. AFTER HEARING IT KHADDAM HAD RESPONDED AS FOLLOWS: SYRIA HAD RECEIVED THE DELEGATION BECAUSE IT REPRESENTED THE NEW ETHIOPIA. THE GOS WOULD BE PLEASED TO HEAR THAT THE EPMG INTENDED TO SOLVE THE ERITREAN PROBLEM AND THAT IT HAD REORIENTED ETHIOPIA'S POLICY TOWARDS THE ARAB WORLD. HOWEVER, SYRIA HAD ANOTHER VIEW OF ERITREA'S HISTORY. IT CONSIDERED, THEREFORE, THAT ETHIOPIA SHOULD TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE "NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS" OF THE INSURGENTS AND SEEK A QUICK MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION TO THE CONFLICT. SPEED WAS ESSENTIAL AS KHADDAM HAD THE IMPRESSION THERE WAS NOT MUCH TIME LEFT. LATER, MAHMOUD AL AYYOUBI HAD ECHOED THAT VIEW.

5. THE JANUARY 31 OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING IN ASMARA HAD FOUND THE EPMG DEL IN IRAQ. THE IRAQIS HAD TAKEN THE SAME POSITION AS THE SYRIANS (DESCRIBED AS THAT OF REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL MEMBER AL QANNAM(?). EVEN THEIR ARTICULATION ("ERITREAN NATIONAL INTERESTS" - "NOT MUCH TIME") HAD BEEN THE SAME. THE DELEGATION HAD EXPECTED TO MEET PRESIDENT AL BAKR, BUT THE LATTER BECAME INDISPOSED FOLLOWING THE RECEIPT IN BAGHDAD OF NEWS FROM ASMARA AND THE DELEGATION, AFTER WAITING A DAY OR TWO, DEPARTED.

6. ACCORDING TO DR. FITIGU, THE ETHIOPIANS CONCLUDED AFTER DAMASCUS AND BAGHDAD THAT THEY FACED AN ARAB LEAGUE POSITION. THEY RETURNED TO KHARTOUM WHERE NIMEIRY THEN BROACHED HIS PROPOSAL. THE DIRG/EPMG WERE UPSET BY PRESIDENT NIMEIRY'S UNEXPECTED SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATION OF ITS THREE POINTS (CEASE FIRE, RELEASE OF ERITREAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS). THEY FELT THAT LEAPING AT THE OFFER AND SENDING CONFIDENTIAL

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A DELEGATION PROMPTLY TO KHARTOUM TO NEGOTIATE WOULD HAVE CONFIRMED THE INSURGENTS' VISION OF THE EPMG AS WEAK AND WITHOUT ALTERNATIVES. THE DIRG/EPMG ACCORDINGLY DECIDED "ON A MILITARY DEMONSTRATION." NIMEIRY, WHO HAD APPARENTLY PROMISED TO DELIVER AN EPMG DEL COULD BE RELIED UPON TO DO HIS UTMOST TO KEEP EVENTUAL INTERLOCUTORS IN KHARTOUM.

7. THE DIRG/EPMG, ACCORDINGLY, WAITED AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN ERITREA CONTINUED. ON FEBRUARY 27, HOWEVER, A FURTHER NIMEIRY MESSAGE HAVING BEEN RECEIVED IN ADDIS, THE DIRG/EPMG SENT WORD TO KHARTOUM THAT AN ETHIOPIAN DELEGATION WOULD BE PREPARED TO COME. THE DELEGATION WOULD BE PREPARED TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS (WITH UNSPECIFIED INTERLOCUTORS, PRESUMABLY THE INSURGENTS AS WELL AS THE SUDANESE) "WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ETHIOPIAN UNITY." THIS DELEGATION, FITIGU SAID, IS EXPECTED TO PROCEED TO KHARTOUM

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SHORTLY. HE WOULD BE ON IT.
WYMAN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED BAGHDAD.

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